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42 STAMP SIZE PORTRAITS OF THE **Kings & Queens of England**



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ADVANCE

IN JANUARY, 1945, THE LAST GREAT COUNTER OFFENSIVE OF FIELD MARSHAL KARL VON RUNDSTEDT COLLAPSED IN BLACKENED RUIN IN THE SHELL RAVAGED FORESTS OF THE ARDENNES. THE GATEWAY TO GERMANY LAY OPEN -- BUT THE COST HAD BEEN HIGH.



Chapter 1. *The Valiant Few*

THE DIN OF BATTLE STILL RANG IN SERGEANT WATERFIELD'S EARS EVEN THOUGH THE GUNS WERE NOW SILENT. HE STARED WITH BLOOD-SHOT EYES AT A DESPATCH RIDER WHO HAD HALTED CLOSE BY.

ORDERS FROM H.Q.,
SARGE, WE'RE BEING
RELIEVED BY THE
FUSILIERS. PULL YOUR
PLATOON BACK AT
O-NINE-HUNDRED
HOURS.

PLATOON! THERE'S
NOT ENOUGH LEFT TO
MAKE UP A FULL
SECTION! TELL THE
CAPTAIN WE'LL BE
BACK -- ALL SIX
OF US!



AS THE RIDER PLOUGHED OFF THROUGH THE MUD, FIVE GAUNT FIGURES DETACHED THEMSELVES FROM THE SODDEN EARTH.

CORPORAL HEGAN --
SEEMS LIKE THEY'VE
RUN OUT O' JERRIES
WE'RE MOVING BACK
TO RESERVE.

IF WE'D STAYED IN
THIS PERISHIN' HOLE
MUCH LONGER WE'D
HAVE TAKEN ROOT...



THE SERGEANT WATCHED HIS MEN FILE PAST, STILL IN THE NIGHTMARE GRIP OF THE LAST THREE WEEKS, CONTINUOUS FIGHTING. BITTERLY HE THOUGHT OF THE LIEUTENANT AND THE TWENTY-FIVE OTHERS, WHO WOULD NOT BE COMING BACK.

NOTICE SOMETHING ABOUT US SIX - THAT ARE LEFT, HEGAN? WE'RE ALL THE OLD SWEATS! THE OTHERS, POOR KIDS, NEVER STOOD A CHANCE.

IT'S BEEN A LONG WAR, BASHER. GUESS WE LEARN'T TO BEAT FRITZ ON THE DRAW BACK WITH THE OLD DESERT GROUP.



WHEN THEY REACHED THE BATTALION REST AREA, TAUT NERVES SLOWLY UNWOUND.

HERE WE ARE, MATES, SOCKS, GREY WOOLLEN, FOR THE USE OF. RUMOUR FLOATIN' ROUND IS, WE'VE DONE OUR LITTLE BIT. GOING TO SHIP US BACK TO THE U.K.

I SHOULD COCOA! THEY'LL LUMBER US WITH A BUNCH OF ROOKIES AN' WE'LL BE CHASING JERRY BACK OVER THE RHINE. YOU MARK MY WORDS!



ONLY FIGHTING I WANT IS IN A NAAFI QUEUE IN ALDERSHOT.

THE CORPORAL'S CYNICAL PREDICTION PROVED CORRECT.

WHO THE BLAZES ARE THESE?

YOUR REINFORCEMENTS, BASHER! ALL YOU'RE GETTING, ONLY TEN MEN FOR THE WHOLE BATTALION. BY THE WAY, O-GROUP AT SIXTEEN HUNDRED HOURS. WE'RE MOVING BACK UP THE LINE TONIGHT.



WHEN THE COMPANY SERGEANT MAJOR HAD LEFT, SERGEANT WATERFIELD HEAVED A DESPAIRING SIGH.

WELL, WHAT'S YOUR NAMES? SEEN ANY SERVICE, EITHER OF YOU?

DYLAN MORGAN, SERGEANT. DUNKIRK, NORTH AFRICA, ITALY. SEEN A BIT O' ACTION, I HAVE.

PRIVATE M. RUSSELL, SERGEANT. INFANTRY TRAINING CENTRE, SALISBURY. I'VE BEEN IN THE ARMY TWENTY WEEKS. BUT I...



THE EAGER VOICE OF THE YOUNGSTER TRAILED INTO SILENCE BEFORE THE SERGEANT'S COLD STARE OF DISAPPROVAL.

TO HIDE THE BITTERNESS IN HIS EYES, WATERFIELD TURNED ABRUPTLY BACK TO THE TASK OF SCRAPING AT HIS JAW.

TAKE 'EM OVER TO OUR BIVVY AREA, COAKLEY.

OKAY, SARGE! COME ON, YOU TWO!

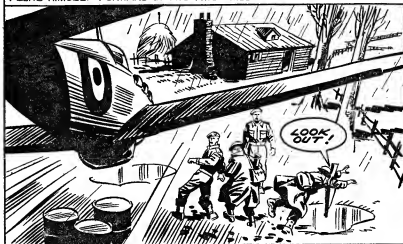
REINFORCEMENTS! A BARRACK-ROOM LAWYER, IF EVER I'VE SEEN ONE, AND A KID STILL WET BEHIND THE EARS. HECK, WHAT AN ARMY!



YOUNG MICK RUSSELL FELT DESPERATELY ALONE AMONG THESE HARD-FACED MEN. THE DULL MUTTER OF DISTANT GUNS DID NOTHING TO EASE THE FEAR THAT NIGGLED AT THE PIT OF HIS STOMACH.



WITH SUDDEN EARTH-SHAKING SOUND, A FLIGHT OF TYPHOONS SCREAMED LOW OVERHEAD. UTTERING AN INVOLUNTARY SHOUT OF ALARM, MICK FLUNG HIMSELF FORWARD IN THE THICK MUD.



UNIFORM COVERED WITH FARMYARD MUD, MICK LOOKED UP SHAKILY TO FACE THE BROAD GRINS OF THE VETERANS.

THAT'S TAKEN THE CREASES OUT O' YOUR GREATCOAT, SON.

I... I ER THOUGHT THEY WERE ENEMY...

RELAX, KID. AIN'T BEEN A SMELL OF THE LUFTWAFFE FOR DAYS NOW. YOU'LL SOON GET TO KNOW THE SOUND O' JERRY ENGINES.

FACE STILL CRIMSON WITH EMBARRASSMENT, MICK SWUNG ROUND AS THE HARSH VOICE OF THE SERGEANT CUT SHORT THE ROUGH LAUGHTER.

CUT THE CACKLE! WE MOVE UP THE LINE AT LAST LIGHT. SEE YOUR WEAPONS ARE IN GOOD SHAPE. PASS THE WORD, YOU LOT! HOW OLD ARE YOU, SON?

WELL--ER--EIGHTEEN, SERGEANT. I'M SORRY I....

EIGHTEEN! JUST ANOTHER GREEN KID THAT WOULD END UP AS CANNON FODDER. THE SERGEANT'S FACE DARKENED.

DON'T LET THIS BUNCH OF ROUGHNECKS THROW YOU, KID. UP HERE THERE'S ONLY THE QUICK AND THE DEAD...

YES, SERGEANT, I'LL DO MY BEST!

MICK'S SHOULDERS DROOPED AS HE WATCHED THE BURLY FIGURE OF THE SERGEANT STRIDE AWAY. THEN A QUIET, SYMPATHETIC VOICE SPOKE AT HIS ELBOW.

HE MUST THINK I'M JUST A DEAD LOSS. MAYBE I AM AT THAT!

YOU'LL BE OKAY, YOUNG 'UN. BETTER GET THAT MUCK OFF YOUR COAT AN' WE'LL SEND MOST OF YOUR CLOBBER BACK TO 'B ECHOLON. CAN'T GO INTO ACTION LOADED LIKE A PACK MULE.



PRIVATE DAI MORGAN, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAD THE OLD SOLDIER'S ABILITY TO MAKE HIMSELF AT HOME IN ANY BILLET.

NICE COMFY LITTLE PLACE THIS, CORPORAL. ALL THESE HILLS AROUND. REMINDS ME O' BACK HOME. WAKE ME UP WHEN THE BATTLE'S OVER, WILL YOU?

ON YOUR FEET, SOLDIER. GET THESE GRENADES PRIMED UP -- AND LOOK SLIPPY ABOUT IT.



AS THE CORPORAL HURRIED OFF, MORGAN CONTINUED TO RELAX. HE HAD NOT BEEN KNOWN AS "EXCUSED BOOTS, DAI" IN HIS LAST UNIT FOR NOTHING.

IN THE COLD JANUARY NIGHT, THE BATTALION MOVED UP TO FORWARD POSITIONS. FOR THE FIRST TIME MICK RUSSELL FOUND HIMSELF STARING OUT ACROSS THE COLD HOSTILITY OF NO MAN'S LAND. HE WAS GLAD HE SHARED THE WATCH IN THE FRIENDLY COMPANY OF TED BATCHELOR.

HAVE A GOOD EMBARKATION LEAVE, MICK?

DIDN'T TAKE IT -- HADN'T ANYWHERE TO GO REALLY.



SUDDENLY, IN THOSE QUIET SILENT HOURS OF THE NIGHT, MICK FOUND HIMSELF BLURTING OUT A TALE OF LONELINESS THAT HAD BEEN PENT UP INSIDE HIM FOR TOO LONG.

I'M AN ORPHAN. NEVER KNEW MY MUM OR DAD. THEY FOUND ME IN RUSSELL STREET, BOW. THAT'S HOW I GOT MY NAME. I--I WANT TO MAKE GOOD IN THE ARMY, TED! YOU SEE, IT'S THE ONLY HOME I'VE GOT.

NOT TO WORRY, MICK. I'LL SHOW YOU THE ROPES. THE ---



SOMETHING HAD MOVED OUT IN THE DARKNESS. WITH TREMBLING FINGERS, MICK THREW THE CATCH OF THE GUN TO AUTOMATIC FIRE.

THERE'S SOMETHING MOVING OUT THERE, ALL RIGHT!



FOR SECONDS MICK FROZE WITH HORROR, HIS MOUTH DRY. THEN HE SAW THEM, DARK OMINOUS FIGURES -- COMING STRAIGHT TOWARDS HIM.



HIS FINGERS CLOSED ROUND THE TRIGGER. A BURST OF LIQUID TRACER LACED THE AIR.

NEXT MOMENT, A STUNNING BLOW SENT HIM REELING INTO THE BOTTOM OF THE SLIT TRENCH. A RAUCOUS AMERICAN VOICE SNARLED OUT OF THE DARKNESS.

CUT IT OUT,
MICK! **THEY'RE
YANKS!**

WHAT THE SAM
HILL P HECK / QUIT
THE SHOOTIN',
WILL YER!





WITH THE COLLAPSE OF THE GERMAN OFFENSIVE IN THE ARDENNES, THE BRITISH AND CANADIAN ARMIES STRUCK NORTH TOWARDS THE RHINE.

FUNNY, REALLY! I'VE BEEN UP THE LINE THREE DAYS, AND I HAVEN'T SEEN A GERMAN OR HEARD A SHOT FIRED IN ANGER.

YOU WILL! WE'RE HEADING STRAIGHT FOR 'EM, BOY. THE WHOLE DIV. IS ON THE MOVE. THAT MEANS ONE THING, WE'RE GOING TO TAKE A SMACK AT CROSSING THE RHINE.



FOR THREE DAYS THE CONVOYS GROUND ALONG THE MUD-CAKED ROADS. THEN, AT LAST, WEARY, STIFF-LEGGED MEN DISMOUNTED, SERGEANT WATERFIELD CALLED HIS PLATOON TOGETHER...

FROM HERE ON, IT'S FOOT-SLOGGING. JERRY'S PULLED BACK. OUR JOB IS TO PROBE FORWARD AND MAKE CONTACT. CORPORAL HEGAN, ISSUE OUT AS MUCH AMMUNITION AS EACH MAN CAN CARRY. WE MOVE OFF IN HALF-AN-HOUR.

OKAY, BASHER!



THEY MOVED THROUGH A DESOLATE COUNTRYSIDE THAT STILL BORE THE LIVID SCARS OF BITTER FIGHTING.



ALL STATIONS
FOX ONE, ADVANCE.
WILL HALT ON
BLACKPOOL RIDGE.
REPEAT, HALT ON
BLACKPOOL
RIDGE...OVER.

AS POINT SECTION, THE MEN OF THREE PLATOON WERE THE FIRST TO REACH THE RIDGE WITH THE CODE NAME BLACKPOOL.

THE MAP SHOWS A JERRY SCHLOSS UP AHEAD, TED. THE COLONEL WANTS TO KNOW IF IT'S CLEAR O' JERRIES. TAKE MORGAN AND YOUNG RUSSELL WITH YOU. YOU KNOW THE DRILL.

SURE THING, SARGE.
WE'D BETTER LOOK
SNAPPY IF WE'RE
GOING TO MAKE IT
'FORE DARK.



THE THREE MEN SET OUT DOWN THE EERILY SILENT WOODED SLOPES OF THE VALLEY.

SHOVE A ROUND UP THE SPOUT,
AND PUT YOUR SAFETY CATCH OFF.
KEEP YOUR EYES PEELED, SON!
WE COULD BOUNCE 'EM ANY
TIME NOW.

RIGHT,
TED.

NOT A LIVE JERRY
FOR MILES, IF YOU ASK
ME. ALL GONE BACK
OVER THE RHINE.



FOR OVER AN HOUR THEY ADVANCED CAUTIOUSLY UNTIL, AT LAST, THE OLD CASTLE STOOD GAUNT AND BLACK AGAINST THE SKYLINE.

WHAT DID I TELL YOU, MAN? NOT A SIGN O' LIFE!



LOOKS QUIET ENOUGH. TIME'S GETTING ON. WE'LL MAKE A QUICK SHIFT! ROUND AND HEAD BACK.

MICK MADE A NERVOUS ATTEMPT TO CONQUER THE COLD FEAR THAT CLUTCHED AT HIM. IMPETUOUSLY, HE LUNGED FORWARD AT THE GREAT OAK DOORWAY.

NO NEED TO GO LOOKING FOR TROUBLE, MICK. BACK UP AGAINST THE WALL, BOTH OF YOU!

I--I'LL GO FIRST, TED!



WITH A FEW SLASHES WITH HIS BAYONET, TED BATCHELOR HACKED DOWN A STURDY BRANCH OF A TREE. THEN HE CAREFULLY PRODDED AT THE MASSIVE DOORWAY UNTIL IT GROANED OPEN ON ITS ANCIENT HINGES.



THERE WAS A BLINDING FLASH --- AND THE DOORWAY DISSOLVED IN A MASS OF SPLINTERED TIMBER AND CRUMBLING MASONRY.

YOUNG RUSSELL'S MOUTH WENT DRY, HIS VOICE HARDLY A CROAK.

THAT--- THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN MY LOT!

ANOTHER LITTLE LESSON FOR YOU, MICK. JERRY IS FOND O' LEAVING SOUVENIRS BEHIND. THERE'S NO SECOND CHANCES IN THIS GAME!



SAVE US RINGING THE DOORBELL, ANYWAY.

WARILY THEY ENTERED THE GREAT, GLOOMY HALL. THEIR VOICES ECHED BACK FROM THE DAMP WALLS.

CHEERFUL PLACE FOR A FUNERAL, ISN'T IT! IT'S GLAD I'LL BE TO BE OUT OF HERE.

NO NEED TO WORRY ABOUT ANY MORE BOOBY-TRAPS. WE'RE THE FIRST IN THIS DUMP FOR YEARS. COME ON. WE'LL SEE WHAT IT'S LIKE FOR AN O.R. ON THE ROOF.



A CARPET OF DUST DEADENED THE HEAVY TREAD OF THEIR BOOTS AS THEY CLIMBED THE SPIRAL STAIRCASE OF THE NORTH TURRET. THEY REACHED THE THIRD--THEN...



AS THEY CLAMMERED DOWN THE STAIRWAY TO THE FIRST FLOOR, THEY HEARD THE PANZER GRIND TO A HALT. THE GLINT OF BATTLE WAS IN TED'S EYE ...

LEAVE IT BE, MAN! THEY'LL BLOW US TO KINGDOM COME.

THEY'VE OPENED THE HATCHES, IT'S A SITTING DUCK! WE'LL NEVER GET ANOTHER CHANCE LIKE THIS. GIVE ME A COUPLE O' GRENADES -- QUICK!



SWIFTLY, MICK HANDED OVER THE TWO DEADLY MILLS BOMBS.

STAND BY TO GIVE COVERING FIRE -- JUST IN CASE.

SUICIDE IT IS! COME ON, MICK, RUN FOR IT!

NO! I'M STICKING WITH TED!



AT SUCH SHORT RANGE, TED BATCHELOR COULD NOT MISS. A GRENADE DROPPED NEATLY INTO EACH OPEN CUPOLA OF THE NAZI TANK.

TEUFEL! ENGLANDER!



FOR LONG PETRIFIED SECONDS, THE BRITISH AND GERMANS STARED AT EACH OTHER. **THE GRENADES HAD NOT EXPLODED!** THEN THE SPELL BROKE.

ELEVATE THE
GUN, YOU FOOLS!
FEUER! FEUER!



THE GERMAN TANK COMMANDER'S SCHMEISSER
RAKED THE APERTURE WITH HOT LEAD.

I'M GETTING
OUT!

TED!

AAGH!



EVEN AS HE FELL, TED LOOSED ONE FINAL BURST OF DEFIANCE FROM HIS TOMMY GUN.

AAGH!



AT THE SIGHT OF THEIR STRICKEN COMMANDER, THE NAZI CREW PANICKED.

ACH! THE LEUTNANT IS KAPUT!

OTTO, GET MOVING-- SCHNELL! THERE MAY BE OTHER ENGLANDERS!



BELCHING FLAME FROM ITS EXHAUSTS, THE HUGE PANZER THUNDERED OFF INTO THE DARKNESS.

MICK HURRIED DOWN TO HIS FRIEND AND WITH FUMBLING, UNSKILLED HANDS APPLIED FIELD DRESSINGS TO THE UGLY WOUNDS. TED'S VOICE WAS NO MORE THAN A HUSKY WHISPER.

NO SECOND CHANCES IN THIS GAME, SON! MY MISTAKE -- SHOULD HAVE CHECKED THOSE GRENADES. THEY WEREN'T PRIMED.

I'LL GET YOU BACK, TED... Y--YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT...



Chapter 2. *Death of a Friend*



STEP BY STEP, THROUGH THE LONG NIGHT HOURS, HE STAGGERED ON WITH HIS BURDEN, LOSING COUNT OF TIME AND DIRECTION. SEVERAL TIMES HE FELL, BUT EACH TIME SHEER WILL-POWER DRAGGED HIM TO HIS FEET TO BATTLE WITH THE SILENT PROTEST OF TORTURED MUSCLES.



MEANWHILE, MORGAN, THE OTHER MEMBER OF THAT ILL-FATED PATROL, HAD FOUND HIS WAY BACK TO THE PLATOON. A STONY-FACED SERGEANT LISTENED TO HIS REPORT.



THE LOSS OF ANOTHER VETERAN WAS A HARD KNOCK FOR THE SERGEANT. BITTERNESS ETCHED THE LINES A LITTLE DEEPER INTO HIS FACE..

PUT YOUR REPORT INTO THE O.C. TOMORROW. WHAT HAPPENED TO RUSSELL, OR WERE YOU TOO BUSY RUNNING TO NOTICE ?

OH, I THINK HE TRIED TO MAKE A BOLT FOR IT. MAYBE THE JERRIES GOT HIM. IT ALL HAPPENED SO QUICK LIKE.



THE BATTALION STOOD-TO JUST BEFORE DAWN. IN A FORWARD POST, CORPORAL HEGAN STIFFENED AND PEERED FORWARD.

LOOK! JUST TO THE RIGHT O' THOSE BUSHES, PETE! SOMETHING'S MOVING!

HOLD YOUR FIRE, COKEY. IT AIN'T JERRIES...



THEY FOUND YOUNG MICK RUSSELL LIKE SOME UNGAINLY CRAB, HE WAS STILL DRAGGING HIS LOAD THROUGH THE MUD. HIS GLAZED EYES DID NOT SEE THE KHAKI-CLAD LEGS THAT GATHERED ROUND HIM.

HANG ON, TED!
IT CAN'T BE...
WE'LL... GOT
TO...

GOOD GRIEF!
IT'S YOUNG
RUSSELL!

HEY!
STRETCHER
PARTY AT
THE DOUBLE!



GENTLY, THEY LIFTED THE YOUNGSTER ON TO A STRETCHER AND HE SANK INTO THE DEEP OBLIVION OF EXHAUSTED SLEEP. HE DID NOT HEAR THE INFINITE SADNESS IN THE CORPORAL'S WORDS.

TED MUST HAVE BOUGHT IT
HOURS AGO! POOR KID, HE'S
BEEN HUMPING A DEAD
MAN ALL NIGHT.



IT WAS A WEEK BEFORE MICK WAS RELEASED FROM THE BASE HOSPITAL. BUT BY THEN CONTACT HAD BEEN MADE WITH THE MAIN GERMAN DEFENCES. FOR HOURS HE SEARCHED FOR HIS UNIT.

SEEN THE FOURTH QUEENS RIFLES ANYWHERE?



AYE, LADDIE, 'BOUT TWO MILES UP AHEAD. JERRY'S GOT 'EM PINNED DOWN IN SOME WOODS. WATCH YOUR STEP!

INDIFFERENT TO THE VIOLENCE AROUND HIM, MICK WALKED ON UNTIL A BRAWNY ARM REACHED UP AND DRAGGED HIM INTO A BUNKER.



HEY!
WHAT THE
BLAZES...?

GET DOWN,
YOU CLOT!
YOU WON'T
LAST FIVE
MINUTES
ABOVE
GROUND.

WITH A SPINE-JARRING THUMP, MICK HAD REJOINED HIS PLATOON.

WOTCHER,
MATE. YOU
PICKED A
NICE
HEALTHY
TIME TO
COME
VISITING.

HOPE YOU'RE IN GOOD
SHAPE FOR A SCRAP.
THE SARGE IS UP
COMPANY H.Q. NOW
GETTING ORDERS.
WE'LL BE GOING IN TO
KNOCK OUT THOSE
JERRY GUNS SOON AS
HE GETS BACK.



THEN THE BURLY FIGURE OF SERGEANT WATERFIELD DROPPED HEAVILY INTO THE TRENCH. FOR A BRIEF MOMENT, THE HARD LINES OF HIS FACE SOFTENED WHEN HE SAW WHO HAD JOINED THEM.

HELLO, YOUNG 'UN!
GOOD TO SEE
YOU BACK...



AS THEY CROUCHED ON THE START LINE, SHELLS OF THE SUPPORT FIRE SIGHED LAZILY OVERHEAD. THE SERGEANT WATCHED THE UPRAISED ARM OF THE OFFICER ...

SOON AS THEY LOB SMOKE OVER,
WE GO IN. BOTTOM OF THE
ESCARPMENT THERE'S A VIADUCT.
THE JERRY GUNS ARE THE OTHER
SIDE OF IT. OUR JOB IS TO NAIL
'EM. ANY QUESTIONS?

YEH, BASHER!
CAN I HAVE
FOURTEEN DAYS'
LEAVE?



MICK FELT NO FEAR OF THE COMING ATTACK. THE ONE MAN WHO HAD SHOWN HIM THE WARMTH OF FRIENDSHIP WAS DEAD AND HE ALMOST HOPED AN END TO HIS OWN MISERY WAS WAITING FOR HIM.

DON'T LIKE THE LOOK O' YOUNG RUSSELL. KEEP AN EYE ON HIM, HEGAN.

OKAY-- HE TOOK IT PRETTY BAD ABOUT TED.



THE BARRAGE LIFTED. TIGHT-LIPPED, THEY LURCHED FORWARD INTO THE ATTACK.

LET'S GO, MEN... **ADVANCE!**



STUMBLING AND CURSING, THEY STARTED DOWN THE LONG SLIPPERY DESCENT. FROM THEIR FLANKS CAME THE HARSH BARK OF VICKERS GUNS. BELOW THEM, THE NAZI POSITIONS LAY, WREATHED IN SMOKE.

WATCH OUT, KID. THEY'RE ONLY WAITING FOR US TO GET WITHIN RANGE. WHEN THE SHOOTING STARTS, YOU STICK CLOSE WITH ME ... GOT IT ?



THEY WERE HALF WAY DOWN THE TREACHEROUS SLOPE WHEN THE GERMAN GUNS MET THEM WITH A MURDEROUS GREETING. THE THIN LINES OF KHAKI-CLAD FIGURES WAVERED. ABOVE THE INFERNAL RACKET, WATERFIELD'S VOICE BELLOWED OUT, AND THEY SURGED ON.



ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE VALLEY, CONCEALED GERMAN MORTAR AND SPANDAU POSTS HAD ESCAPED THE SOFTENING UP BOMBARDMENT OF THE BRITISH TWENTY-FIVE POUNDERS. WITH UNLEASHED FURY, THEY REAPED A TERRIBLE HARVEST.



THEN THE INFANTRY WERE IN THE DEAD GROUND BELOW THE KILLING ZONE OF THE GERMAN GUNS.



WITH A FANATICAL ZEST, THE GERMAN STORM TROOPERS POURED FORWARD IN A SUICIDAL COUNTER-ATTACK.



A LACERATING FIRE SCYTHED INTO THE NAZI RANKS. ONLY A HANDFUL OF GERMANS SURVIVED TO CLASH IN THE WILD MELEE OF CLOSE QUARTER FIGHTING ...





THERE WAS NO TIME FOR PITY. WATERFIELD DRAGGED THE YOUNGSTER TO HIS FEET AND SLASHED A BACKHANDER ACROSS THE HYSTERICAL FACE.



SEEING THE FAILURE OF THE COUNTER-ATTACK, THE ENEMY COMMANDER DIRECTED THE MASSED FIRE OF A MACHINE GUN SECTION AT THE BRITISH POSITIONS.

THOSE DOGS REFUSE TO DIE! GET YOUR GUNS INTO ACTION, SCHNELL!

JAWOHL, HERR OBERST!

AGAIN THE BATTALION WAS PINNED DOWN.

LOOKS LIKE JERRY'S GOT US SEWN UP GOOD AND PROPER, SARGE! WE'RE TOO CLOSE IN TO CALL FOR AN ARTILLERY SHOOT.

IF ONLY WE COULD SNUFF THOSE M.G.s ON THE BRIDGE!

HERE! GIVE ME THE PIAT!

BEFORE THE SERGEANT COULD STOP HIM, HEGAN SNATCHED UP THE MISSILE PROJECTOR AND STARTED BACK UP THE ESCARPMENT.

HE'LL NEVER MAKE IT!

KEEP GOING, HEGAN! KEEP GOING!

CORPORAL HEGAN WAS ONLY FIFTY YARDS FROM THE LEDGE WHEN A LONG BURST FASTENED ON TO HIM.



IN HORRIFIED FASCINATION, MICK HAD WATCHED HEGAN'S GALLANT BUT FUTILE BID TO SAVE HIS COMRADES.

HEGAN!
IF ONLY HE
COULD HAVE...



SUDDENLY ONE OF THE INFANTRYMEN
LOOKED ROUND.

PETE! THAT YOUNG
KID -- RUSSELL -- HE'S
CLEARING OUT.

LEAVE HIM, COKEY.
PROBABLY GONE BOMB
HAPPY! SLAM
ANOTHER MAG ON
THIS BREN.

UNENCUMBERED BY HEAVY
EQUIPMENT, RUSSELL
BOUNDED UP THE SLOPE
LIKE A YOUNG ANTELOPE.
HEAVY SLUGS TORE THE
EARTH AROUND HIM, BUT
HE NEVER LOOKED BACK.

MUST... MUST GET...
THAT PIAT!



THE GERMAN FIRE WAS TAKING A DEADLY TOLL.



THE SERGEANT CRAWLED ACROSS TO WHERE THE LITTLE WELSHMAN LAY MORTALLY WOUNDED. THE LITING VOICE WAS HARDLY MORE THAN A WHISPER.

DON'T SUPPOSE I'LL SEE THE OLD RHONDDA VALLEY AGAIN, SARGE. TELL YOUNG MICK THOSE GRENADES HE GAVE TO TED -- MY FAULT...



I NEVER PRIMED THEM -- HEGAN TOLD ME TO. ALWAYS A LAZY SORT O' CUSS I WAS! WOULDN'T LIKE YOUNG MICK TO BLAME HIMSELF -- YOU TELL...

YES, I'LL TELL HIM.



THE VOICE TRAILED AWAY. FOR THE LITTLE BARRACK-ROOM LAWYER THE WAR WAS OVER.

THE SEARING PAIN OF A FLESH WOUND BURNED MICK'S SHOULDER, BUT HE HAD THE PIAT. THERE WAS A SMILE ON HIS FACE AS HE AIMED THE DEADLY WEAPON ACROSS THE VALLEY.



AT THAT MOMENT, THE PIAT BOMB TORE A GAPING HOLE IN THE MASONRY OF THE VIADUCT AND A SPANDAU NEST DISINTEGRATED.



A RAGGED CHEER WENT UP FROM THE HARD-PRESSED INFANTRY AS ANOTHER BOMB SAILED OVER AND A SECOND NAZI GUN CUT SHORT.

GREAT SCOTT! IT'S THE KID FIRING THAT PIAT!



MINUTES LATER, WATERFIELD FLUNG HIMSELF DOWN BESIDE THE STARTLED YOUNG SOLDIER.

GREAT WORK, RUSSELL! LISTEN, LAD... THOMAS GOT HIT! 'FORE HE WENT, HE TOLD ME ABOUT THE GRENADES. HE SHOULD HAVE PRIMED THEM. D'YOU UNDERSTAND? IT WASN'T YOUR FAULT!



A MIST CLOUDED MICK'S VISION. HE GROPED FOR WORDS, BUT THEY WOULD NOT COME...

THE SILENCING OF THE GERMAN GUNS WAS THE CHANCE THE VETERANS HAD BEEN AWAITING. WITH A ROAR, THE BRITISH LEAPED TO THEIR FEET AND SWEEPED FORWARD...

**CHARGE! FORWARD,
ME LUCKY LADS!**



THE GERMAN BASTION HAD BEEN BREACHED. NOTHING COULD CHECK THE WAVES OF KHAKEI-CLAD MEN THAT WASHED OVER THE NAZI BATTERIES.

**FIGHT BACK, YOU
SCUM! FIGHT
BACK!**



ON THE HILLSIDE, THE SOUNDS OF FIRING SLOWLY DIED AWAY. ANOTHER DAY OF BATTLE WAS ENDING AND THE RANKS OF NUMBER THREE PLATOON HAD GROWN EVEN THINNER.

WELL--ER-- THANKS! IT'S BEEN QUITE A DAY.

CHOCOLATE?

SURE HAS. YOU'LL GET A MENTION IN DESPATCHES FOR WHAT YOU DID. BE SOMETHING TO TELL YOUR FOLKS BACK HOME.

EVEN IN THE FADING LIGHT, WATERFIELD SAW THE OLD SADNESS CREEP BACK ACROSS THE YOUNGSTER'S FACE ...

I'VE NO FOLKS. NOBODY GIVES A TINKER'S CUSS IF I'M DEAD OR ALIVE. COME TO THINK OF IT, I DON'T MUCH CARE MYSELF.

I SEE! COME ON, LET'S BE GETTING BACK WITH THE OTHERS.

AS THEY WALKED SLOWLY DOWN THE HILL, THE RUGGED SERGEANT PUT A PROPOSITION THAT TOOK MICK'S BREATH AWAY.

LOOK, MICK, THIS ROTTEN WAR CAN'T LAST MUCH LONGER. I'VE GOT A LITTLE GARAGE BACK HOME--IT'S ONLY SMALL, BUT I COULD USE AN EXTRA PAIR OF HANDS. YOU COULD LIVE IN WITH MY PEOPLE. THEY'D BE GLAD TO HAVE YOU. CARE TO HAVE THE JOB?

D'YOU--D'YOU REALLY MEAN THAT? IF ONLY I COULD.

IT HAD BEEN A GLORIOUS BUT TRAGIC DAY FOR THE BATTALION.

RECKON WE'VE
DONE OUR SHARE
THIS TIME, PETE.
THINK THEY'LL
SEND US BACK?

NOT A CHANCE, MATE!
HI, JOHN, YOU LUCKY OLD
SO AND SO -- YOU'VE
STOPPED A BUGHTY ONE
THERE FOR SURE.

YEAH, I'M ON MY WAY
BACK TO THE CASUALTY
STATION NOW. TELL MICK
THE SARGE WANTS HIM DOWN
AT BATTALION H.Q. PRONTO.
SO LONG, YOU BLOKES --
BE SEEING YOU!

SO JOHN ESDALE JOINED
THE LONG TRAIL OF
CASUALTIES MOVING
BACK FROM THE
FRONT LINE ...

JUST YOU, ME AND THE
SARGE LEFT OUT O' THE
WHOLE PLATOON, PETE.
REMEMBER HOW HEGAN WAS
SO SURE WE'D ALL MAKE
IT TO BERLIN TOGETHER?

THERE'S STILL YOUNG
MICKEY -- HE'S ONE
OF US NOW!
PERHAPS HE'LL
GET THERE.
SOMEHOW I'VE GOT
A HUNCH WE'VE
NEARLY SHOT OUR
BOLT, COKEY.



Chapter 3. Veteran

AT BATTALION HEADQUARTERS, THE COLONEL FACED THE SMALL HANDFUL OF COMPANY AND PLATOON COMMANDERS WHO WERE LEFT: FATIGUE AND RESPONSIBILITY SAT HEAVILY ON HIS SHOULDERS.



I KNOW WE'VE JUST ABOUT BEEN DRIVEN INTO THE GROUND. BUT JERRY IS ON THE RUN. THE RHINE CROSSING MUST BE FORCED BEFORE THEY CAN REGROUP. WE ARE GETTING A HUNDRED MEN FROM THE SEVENTH BATTALION AND WE MOVE FORWARD WITH THE BRIGADE TOMORROW...

MICK ARRIVED JUST AS THE SHOCKED OFFICERS WERE FILING WEARILY OUT OF THE BUNKER.

YOU'RE JUST IN TIME, MICK. THE OLD MAN WANTS TO SEE YOU.

ME! YOU KIDDIN', SARGE?



SERGEANT WATERFIELD MARCHED THE STARTLED YOUNGSTER INTO THE COMMAND POST.

PRIVATE RUSSELL, SIR! YOU WISHED TO SEE HIM.



RUSSELL - YOU PUT UP A FIRST-CLASS SHOW TODAY. YOUR ACTION SAVED A GOOD MANY LIVES AND YOU'LL GET A MENTION IN DESPATCHES. YOU ARE ALSO PROMOTED TO CORPORAL, EFFECTIVE AT ONCE.

BEFORE MICK COULD GATHER HIS BEWILDERED THOUGHTS, THE COLONEL HAD SHAKEN HIS HAND, SERGEANT WATERFIELD HAD BARKED AN ORDER, AND THEY WERE ONCE AGAIN OUTSIDE.



THE CRACKS WERE WIDENING IN THE WALLS OF THE NAZI FORTRESS AS THE RING OF ALLIED STEEL CLOSED UPON IT. BUT THE ENEMY FOUGHT NOW LIKE A CORNERED BEAST, HIS FEARSOME NEW WEAPONS STRIKING AT MILITARY AND CIVILIAN TARGETS INDISCRIMINATELY.



THE ALLIED ARMIES MUSTERED BEFORE THE DARK, SWIFT-FLOWING WATERS OF THE RHINE. THEY HAD NO ILLUSIONS ABOUT THE BATTLE AHEAD—IT WOULD BE MORE BITTER, MORE SAVAGE THAN ANY THAT HAD GONE BEFORE.



IN THE SPEARHEAD FORCE WAS NUMBER THREE PLATOON, NOW FIFTEEN MEN STRONG AND WITH A NEW CORPORAL, WAITING QUIETLY FOR ZERO HOUR.

THIS WON'T BE A PICNIC! BUT WE'LL GET GUNNER SUPPORT FOR THE CROSSING AND AIR COVER AT FIRST LIGHT. ONCE WE HIT THE OTHER BANK, COME OUT SHOOTING BUT LISTEN FOR MY ORDERS AT ALL TIMES.



MICK WAS FILLED WITH A COLD APPREHENSION. THE FEAR OF FAILING THOSE VETERANS AROUND HIM HELD MORE TERROR THAN THE HUNGRY GUNS ACROSS THE RIVER.



C'MON, MICK. THIS RIDE'S FOR FREE.

COKEY SAW THE SWEAT GLISTEN ON THE YOUNG CORPORAL'S FACE AND PUT A COMFORTING HAND ON HIS SHOULDER.

OLD BASHER WILL GET US THROUGH, MICK. YOU'LL SEE!

S'RIGHT ENOUGH. NEVER SEEN THE SARGE LOSE HIS HEAD YET!



THEN A RED VERY LIGHT STAINED THE NIGHT SKY. FROM BEHIND THEM, HEAVY ARTILLERY OPENED UP AND THE UNGAINLY ARMADA ROLLED FORWARD INTO THE WATER.



AS THE RANGE SHORTENED, THE BARK OF RIFLES AND THE NERVE-SHATTERING THUD OF HEAVY CALIBRE M.G.s JOINED THE UNHOLY DIN OF BATTLE.

THE GERMAN DEFENCES WERE THICK AND HEAVY. THE FIRST MEN ASHORE, HELD UP BY BARBED WIRE ENTANGLEMENTS, WERE CUT DOWN IN DROVES.



THE AMPHIBIOUS D.U.K.W. CARRYING NO.3 PLATOON PILED ON TO THE HOSTILE BANK. SERGEANT WATERFIELD ROARED A COMMAND AND THE MEN FLUNG THEMSELVES INTO THE INFERNO.

COME ON, THREE PLATOON! SPREAD OUT AND HIT THE DIRT!



AT LAST, MEAGRE GAPS WERE TORN IN THE BARBED WIRE AND THE IMPLACABLE VOICE OF THE SERGEANT WRENCHED HIS MEN TO THEIR FEET AND DROVE THEM FORWARD.

CORPORAL RUSSELL,
COAKLEY! GET THROUGH
THERE AND COVER US
WITH THE BREN.
GO! GO!



IN THE HEAT OF BATTLE, MICK
FOUND HIS COURAGE FLOWING
BACK INTO HIS VEINS. A LETHAL
SPRAY HOSED FROM HIS L.M.G.
AS HE RAN.

KEEP COMING,
COKEY! HAVE
THOSE FRESH
MAGS READY!

RIGHT
WITH YOU,
SON!



THEY FLUNG THEMSELVES DOWN
INTO A SHELL HOLE, BEHIND THEM,
CAME THE VOICE OF SERGEANT
WATERFIELD LIKE THE ANGRY
BELLOW OF A BULL.

FORWARD, THREE!
GO! GO!



THE GRIM CONTOURS OF A PILLBOX BLOCKED THEIR PATH, ITS GAPING SLITS SPITTING OUT A SAVAGE INVITATION OF DEATH. BUT THE SERGEANT WAS A MASTER CRAFTSMAN OF HIS DEADLY TRADE.

RAPID FIRE!
PREPARE TO
ADVANCE!

WITH DEADLY ACCURACY, THE
GRENADE ARCHED TOWARDS THE
ENEMY STRONGPOINT.

A HIDEOUS GLOW ILLUMINATED THE INTERIOR OF THE PILLBOX AND THERE WAS A MUFFLED ROAR. THE GUNS CUT OFF ABRUPTLY.

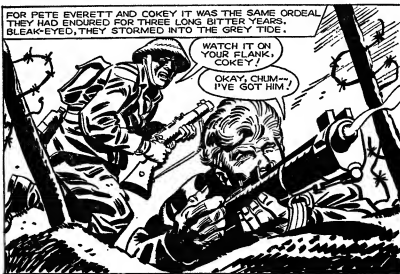
GET INTO
THEM, LADS!

WE'RE WITH
YOU, BASHER!

THE GERMANS WERE FIGHTING NOW WITH THE DESPERATION OF CORNERED RATS. AGAIN MICK SAW FIELD GREY UNIFORMS LOOM THROUGH THE ACRID SMOKE, BUT NOW HE WAS BAPTISED TO THE TERROR OF BATTLE.



FOR PETE EVERETT AND COKEY IT WAS THE SAME ORDEAL THEY HAD ENDURED FOR THREE LONG BITTER YEARS. BLEAK-EYED, THEY STORMED INTO THE GREY TIDE.



THE GERMAN LINE BROKE AND RAN.

NICE GOING, MICK—
CEASE FIRE!
EXTENDED LINE!
**PREPARE TO
ADVANCE!**



THEY STUMBLED THROUGH THE CHOKING DUST THAT CLOAKED AN ANTI-TANK DEFENCE LINE. THEN THE WALKIE-TALKIE CRACKLED AND THE SERGEANT YELLED AN ORDER.

THIS IS AS FAR
AS WE GO, MEN!
GET UP ON THE
RIDGE AND
DIG IN!



AS THE SHOVELS AND ENTRENCHING TOOLS BIT INTO THE HARD GROUND, THEY HEARD THE FIRST OMINOUS RUMBLING OF APPROACHING ARMOUR.

LISTEN! I CAN
HEAR TRACKS
GRINDING. IT
MUST BE...

FULL MARKS,
SON! THOSE ARE
PANZERS -- AND
BIG 'UNS, BY THE
SOUND OF IT.
STAND TO!



MEN WAITED TENSELY AS THE UGLY BULK OF THE STEEL MONSTERS LOOMED OUT OF THE PALE DAWN LIGHT. THE FIRST H.E. SHELLS BURST IN FRONT OF THE BRITISH POSITIONS.

DON'T PANIC!
KEEP YOUR
NAPPERS DOWN.
THEN GO FOR
THEIR TRACKS
WITH GRENADES!



THE ARMOURD COUNTER-ATTACK OF THE GERMANS CAME IN WITH THE DAWN. BUT R.A.F. ROCKET TYPHOONS ARRIVED AT THE SAME TIME.

ACHTUNG!
ENGLANDER
AIRCRAFT!



THE FIGHTERS SCREAMED INTO THE ATTACK, THEIR ROCKETS STREAKING DOWN WITH DEVASTATING EFFECT ON THE NAZI ARMOUR.

BY GOLLY! NEVER BEEN SO GLAD TO SEE THE FLY BOYS SHOW UP!

THE R.A.F. UMBRELLA GAVE THE HARD-PRESSED INFANTRY THE RESPITE THEY SO BADLY NEEDED. BEHIND THEM, THE BUILD-UP ACROSS THE RHINE CONTINUED. FOR THE MOMENT THEY COULD REST.

THOUGHT THEY'D HAVE PUSHED US STRAIGHT ON AFTER JERRY, SARGE.

PITY THEY DIDN'T. ACCORDING TO THESE RECCE PHOTOS, THERE'S ONE O' THOSE V-TWO SITES AHEAD.

THEN THE RATION TRUCK ARRIVED.

GET YOUR MESS TINS OUT, LADS. GRUB UP!

PERSONAL MESSAGE FOR YOU, SARGE. SORRY IT'S BEEN DELAYED.

A FEW MINUTES LATER, MICK NOTICED THE SERGEANT CLIMBING STIFFLY UP THE STEEP SLOPE. THERE WAS SOMETHING ABOUT THE WAY HE MOVED THAT MADE THE YOUNG CORPORAL UNEASY.



A PUFF OF WIND BROUGHT A SCRAP OF PAPER FLUTTERING TO PETE EVERETT'S FEET. HE WAS JUST ABOUT TO KICK IT TO ONE SIDE WHEN THE NAME ON IT CAUGHT HIS EYE.



MICK SCANNED THE MESSAGE TWICE BEFORE THE FULL IMPACT OF THE COLD PRINTED WORDS REGISTERED.

CP/395 SGT. WATERFIELD

IT IS WITH DEEP REGRET WE MUST INFORM YOU THAT YOUR NEXT OF KIN DID NOT SURVIVE WHEN YOUR GARAGE AND HOUSE RECEIVED A DIRECT HIT FROM AN ENEMY ROCKET.

FOR SOME MOMENTS THE MEN STOOD IN AWKWARD SILENCE. THEN THE DEEP-THROATED ROAR OF AN ENGINE SPRINGING TO LIFE CUT ACROSS THEIR THOUGHTS.

THEY FLUNG THEMSELVES UP THE SLOPE. A BATTERED NAZI TANK WAS LURCHING WILDLY AWAY ACROSS COUNTRY.

BASHER'S IN THAT TANK!
**BASHER!
COME BACK!**

SAVE YOUR BREATH, MICK. THERE'S NOTHING GOING TO STOP HIM NOW.

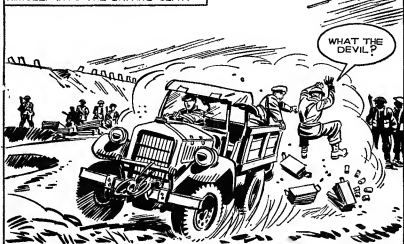


THE SERGEANT SAT AT THE CONTROLS OF THE CRAZILY SWAYING TANK, BLACK HATRED FILLING HIS BRAIN. HE LAUGHED MIRTHLESSLY AT HIS DEAD COMPANION.



YOU CAN'T HEAR ME, KAMERAD, BUT I'LL TAKE A FEW MORE OF YOUR KIND WITH ME WHERE I'M GOING.

MEANWHILE, MICK HAD RACED TO THE RATION TRUCK AND HAD FLUNG HIMSELF INTO THE DRIVING SEAT.



PETE AND COKEY SAW HIM COMING AND LOOKED AT EACH OTHER...



DURING THOSE LAST FEW DAYS, THE GERMANS HAD DOUBLED AND REDOUBLED THEIR FIRING RATE OF V-2 ROCKETS. NOW THE FINAL SALVOES WERE ABOUT TO BE LAUNCHED BEFORE THE SITE WAS EVACUATED.



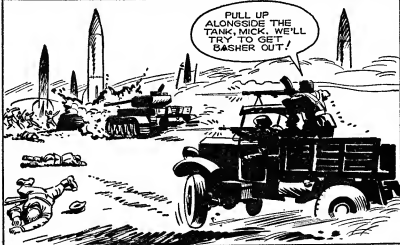
IN THE CONFINES OF THE STEEL HULL, SERGEANT WATERFIELD HAD MOVED THE DEAD GERMAN TO THE CONTROLS, HIS LIFELESS FOOT WEDGED ON THE THROTTLE. THEN THE SERGEANT SLID BEHIND THE MACHINE GUN.



TOO LATE, THE GERMANS REALISED THE HOSTILE INTENT OF THE PANZER THAT CAREERED TOWARDS THEM.



A STICK GRENADE SHATTERED THE TRACKS OF THE RENEGADE TANK, JUST AS MICK AND HIS COMRADES ROARED INTO THE ENEMY SITE.



THE TRUCK SCREECHED TO A STANDSTILL BESIDE THE STRICKEN TANK. MICK TOOK A FLYING LEAP ON TO THE ARMOUR PLATING...



WITH A SUPREME EFFORT, MICK DRAGGED THE LIMP BODY OF THE SERGEANT TO THE SHELTER OF A NEARBY CONCRETE BUNKER. HE HAD BEEN SEVERELY WOUNDED IN THE ARM.



THEY CROOKED YOU BAD, SARGE -- BUT I'LL FIX IT! YOU'VE GOT TO LIVE, BASHER. D'YOU HEAR ME ... YOU'VE GOT TO LIVE!

PETE AND COKEY IN THE TRUCK WERE BLAZING A TRAIL OF DEVASTATION INTO THE HEART OF THE LAUNCHING SITE.



STAND BY, COKEY!

THEN HEAVY MAUSER SLUGS PINNED PETE TO THE BACK OF THE SEAT, BUT HE HELD THE BUCKING VEHICLE ON COURSE. THE MALIGNANT BULK OF THE ROCKETS LOOMED UP THROUGH THE SHATTERED SCREEN.



NOW, COKEY! CHUCK THE GRENADES!



THE LAST THUNDEROUS ECHO DIED AWAY AND MICK DRAGGED HIMSELF OVER TO THE HALF BURIED BODY OF THE SERGEANT. A SOB OF RELIEF BROKE FROM HIS CRACKED LIPS...



WHEN THE FIRST BRITISH UNITS REACHED THE BURNED-OUT SITE, MICK SAID GOODBYE TO THE RUGGED SERGEANT THE GERMANS COULD NOT KILL.

BY THE TIME YOU'RE DEMOBBED I'LL HAVE THE OLD GARAGE GOING AGAIN, MICK, AND I'LL BE NEEDING A BIT O' HELP WITH A DICKY ARM. I'LL BE WAITING FOR YOU, PARTNER. LOOK AFTER YOURSELF!



THE WAR MOVED ON. SERGEANT MICK RUSSELL LOOKED AT THE PLATOON OF NERVOUS YOUNG ROOKIES ABOUT TO GO INTO THEIR FIRST ATTACK. HE THOUGHT OF ALL THOSE WHO HAD NOT MADE THE END OF THE TRAIL, AND OF THE TOUGH OLD SERGEANT WHO WAITED BACK IN BLIGHTY FOR HIS PARTNER TO COME HOME.

RIGHT, MEN--LISTEN TO MY ORDERS AND YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT. **ADVANCE!**



Printed in England by Messrs. Percy Brothers Ltd., Manchester 1, and published each month by Fleetway Publications Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Advertisement Offices: Tail's House, Tail's Street, London, E.C.4. Second class postage paid at New York Post Office, New York. Sole Agents: Australasia, Messrs. Gordon & Gough Ltd. South Africa, Central News Agency Ltd. Palestine of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Messrs. Kingdome Ltd. WAR PICTURES LIBRARY is sold subject to the following conditions, that it shall not, without the written consent of the Publishers first given, be lent, resold, hired out or otherwise disposed of by way of Trade except at the full retail price as shown on the cover; and that it shall not be lent, resold, hired out or otherwise disposed of in a mutilated condition, or in any unsatisfactory cover by way of Trade; or affixed to or as part of any publication or advertising, literary or pictorial matter whatsoever.

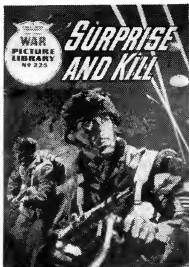
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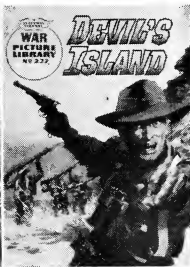
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